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1994/05/06

G. Vance 5/28/94 – telephone conversation
"I don't remember – it was probably as you
stated in your letter to me."

May 6, 1994

Dear Cy:

I am currently revising drafts of my Vietnam chapters -- sharpening language, checking facts, and so forth -- preparatory to submitting the manuscript to the publisher in mid-June. As I review Chapter IV, on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, a matter arises which I hope you will help me with. Specifically, a Vietnam scholar, William C. Gibbons, has written:

> On July 30, 1964, there was a 34-A raid against the North Vietnamese coast. The next day, the U.S.S. Maddox began a DE SOTO patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin in the area near the raid. On August 2, the Maddox was attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. In a meeting that day with Rusk, Ball, Cyrus Vance (Deputy Secretary of Defense), McGeorge Bundy, and Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, the Chairman of the JCS (replacing Taylor), the President ordered an augmented patrol, and the Maddox was joined by the U.S.S. Turner Joy. He also approved another previously scheduled 34-A raid against North Vietnam on the night of August 3.

Gibbons asserts this implies that I did not tell the whole truth when I testified before Congressional committees on August 6, 1964 that I did not know of the August 3, 1964 34A operation at the time it occurred. Gibbons reasons as follows: Why would Cy Vance not tell McNamara about the August 2 White House decision to schedule another 34A operation for August 3 before it occurred the following day, given 1) that LBJ had ordered an augmented DE SOTO patrol; and 2) that Vance was McNamara's "No. 2"? You will recall that I was not present at the August 2 meeting due to my absence from Washington. I believe I returned in the late morning or early afternoon of August 3. 8/4/63

In view of all that was going on at the time, and the inconsequential nature of 34A operations (in my text I quote General Krulak as saying in March 1991, "They were a cipher."), I doubt we discussed whatever decision the White House took on August 2 between the time I returned to Washington and when the 34A operation occurred later that same day. Do you have any recollection of the matter at all?

I enclose copies of the relevant pages from Gibbons' book.

Many thanks, Cy, for taking time to consider this question. If your memory fails you, as does mine, I will understand.

With best wishes.

Enclosures

The Honorable
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